

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY OF RHODE ISLAND WORKING-AGE ADULTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS ON FEE-FOR-SERVICE MEDICAID

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This statewide survey was one part of a comprehensive needs assessment of working-age Rhode Islanders with physical disabilities on fee-for-service Medicaid. In the survey, information was collected on health status, types and prevalence of health conditions, functional limitations, health services utilization, unmet health service need and social supports.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- Sixty-two percent of the survey respondents were female and 38% were male.
- The average age of the survey respondents was 49.
- Almost 70% of the respondents self-identified their race/ethnicity as White non-Hispanic, 15% as Hispanic, and 9% as Black/African American.
- Forty-two percent of respondents reported living alone and 15% reported leaving home never or less than once per week.
- Nearly 22% reported having no one or only one person to count on to help them in times of need.
- Almost 20% reported not having someone to talk with about their personal feelings, worries or hopes.
- **Having no one to count on when in need of help and having no one to talk with about personal hopes and feelings increases the likelihood of emergency department and hospital use.**

HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Over 83% of the survey respondents reported more than one health condition; nearly 65% of respondents reported more than two health conditions.
- **The more health problems respondents have, the more likely they are to need immediate medical care and to use hospitals and EDs.**
- Nearly 65% of respondents reported having only physical conditions; an additional 29% reported having both physical and mental conditions.
- **Among respondents, those persons with both mental and physical conditions have worse health status, are more likely to require immediate medical care, and have higher rates of hospital and ED use than those persons with only physical conditions.**
- The average number of years respondents have had health conditions is 16 years. Almost 50% of respondents have been experiencing health conditions for 11 or more years.
- Twenty-two percent of respondents reported their most serious health problem of the past year to be musculoskeletal and connective tissue disease; mental disorders ranked second with 14.3%; circulatory diseases third, 11.9%; endocrine/metabolic diseases (including diabetes) fourth, 11.5%; nervous system diseases (including seizure disorders) fifth, 10.8%; and respiratory diseases (including asthma) sixth, 10.6%.
- In total, 38% of all respondents reported heart conditions; 29% suffer depression, anxiety, tension, and other emotional and mental conditions; 23% reported back conditions; 20% arthritis; and 13% asthma.
- **Of all health conditions, those with respiratory diseases had worse health status and more need for medical care than persons with other types of health conditions.**

HEALTH STATUS

- **The overwhelming majority of respondents, 75%, reported fair or poor health status. This is in sharp contrast to the 14.8% of all Rhode Islanders who reported fair to poor health status in the year 2000.**
- **Twenty-five percent of respondents reported that health problems kept them from their usual activities every day of the past month, 33% reported that pain kept them from engaging in their usual activities every day of the past month, 28% reported they felt sad, blue or depressed every day of the past month, and 37% reported they felt worried, tense or anxious every day of the past month.**

HEALTH SERVICES UTILIZATION

- **Working-age adults on Medicaid have multiple health problems resulting in complex needs for health care, medication and supportive chronic care services.**
- Nearly 98% of respondents reported they have a usual place to go for medical care.
- Over 90% of respondents reported having their ‘own doctor’ or health care provider.
- Of the 556 persons who participated in the survey, 346 (62.3%) needed immediate medical care in the past year.
- The vast majority of respondents go to a hospital emergency room when they need immediate medical care.
- Nearly 27% of those with their own doctor go to their doctor’s office when in need of immediate medical care.
- Fifty-five percent of respondents reported they used an emergency department in the past year. Though 17% of respondents had made one such visit, over 38% had made two or more emergency department visits in the past year.
- Over 28% of respondents reported they were hospitalized in the past year. Fourteen percent of respondents had one hospitalization, 11% had two to four hospitalizations and 3% had five or more hospitalization in the past year.
- **Survey respondents who have their own doctors were more likely to receive all types of health care preventive screenings than were those without their own doctors.**
- Over 90% of the survey respondents take prescription medications. On average, respondents take 4.9 prescriptions.

UNMET NEEDS OF RHODE ISLANDERS ON FEE-FOR-SERVICE MEDICAID

- Though the percent of respondents with needs for assistance with the activities of daily living (ADLs) is relatively small, about 25% of those who have these needs are not able to get enough help.
- There is greater need among survey respondents for assistance with the instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). In particular, nearly 61% of respondents need help going shopping, 49% need help with housework and over 35% need help preparing meals.

- Over 70% of the survey respondents reported having difficulty walking a quarter of a mile and nearly 70% reported having difficulty climbing one flight of stairs.
- **Survey respondents with ADL and IADL needs have significantly worse health status and significantly higher need for medical care than the survey respondents in general. Overall, the presence of ADL and IADL limitations are better predictors of hospitalizations and ED use, fair to poor health status and need for immediate medical care than are the number of health problems, the nature of health problems or social isolation characteristics.**
- Nearly 76% of respondents reported that it is not difficult to obtain medical care when it is needed.
- For the survey respondents, there was low unmet need (less than or equal to 10%) for doctor's appointments, prescription refills, new prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs, transportation to doctors, disposable medical supplies, specialty medical care, and drug or alcohol counseling.
- There was high unmet need (greater than or equal to 20%) for physical/occupational therapy, mental health counseling, eyeglasses, nutritional counseling, dental care, home health aide and homemaker services, peer support and speech therapy.
- **Survey results show that respondents are more successful in meeting their acute care and medical needs than they are in meeting their needs for chronic care support. This finding suggests that more needs to be done to meet the support needs of this population of chronically ill persons with multiple health conditions.**

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